

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 962

IR 056 450

AUTHOR Swaine, Cynthia Wright
TITLE Helping Librarians To Encourage Critical Thinking through Active Learning Techniques in Library Instruction.
PUB DATE 1997-07-14
NOTE 5p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Libraries; *Active Learning; Class Activities; *Critical Thinking; Higher Education; Information Literacy; Learning Activities; Librarians; *Library Instruction; Reference Services; *Student Participation; Thinking Skills; Users (Information)
IDENTIFIERS Old Dominion University VA

ABSTRACT

Encouraging librarians to incorporate critical thinking skills and active learning techniques in their course instruction requires more than talking about it in a department meeting or distributing articles on the topic. At Old Dominion University (Virginia), librarians have tried conducting workshops, had readily-accessible binders of articles and suggestions for librarians to consult, and held idea-sharing sessions. They have also tried including a related library instruction annual performance objective for each reference librarian involved in instruction. This paper describes this latest attempt to incorporate active learning in library instruction and includes an active learning planning sheet which serves as an outline for planning and gives brief examples of active learning, a sample time frame, and a reminder that it requires more time to plan for the incorporation of critical thinking and active learning. With a continued emphasis on critical thinking skills and active learning, it is expected that librarians will improve their teaching skills and that learners will experience even greater understanding of libraries and information resources.

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

Helping Librarians to Encourage Critical Thinking Through Active Learning Techniques in Library Instruction

Encouraging librarians to incorporate critical thinking skills and active learning techniques in their course instruction isn't just a matter of talking about those things in a department meeting or routing articles about such topics. In addition to these approaches, at Old Dominion University, we have tried conducting workshops, having readily-accessible binders of articles and suggestions for librarians to consult, and holding idea-sharing sessions.

Recently we tried another approach: including a related library instruction annual performance objective for each reference librarian involved in instruction. With some variation, the objective was worded this way:

1. Choose a course you frequently meet with for library instruction.
2. Look at the content afresh and list three to four prime learning objectives ("Students will be able to search/explain/demonstrate...") for the session.
3. Identify at least three ways you will incorporate critical thinking into the session.
4. Identify one "active learning" technique or exercise that you will use during the session.
5. After you implement this in a class, report on it to the Instruction Services Librarian, listing the objectives, critical thinking methods, and the active learning technique you used.
6. Be prepared to report on your teaching session during a Reference & Research Services Department meeting on library instruction techniques.

To assist the librarians, the Instruction Services Librarian created and distributed an active learning planning sheet [see appendix] which serves as an outline for planning but also gives brief examples of active learning, a sample timeframe, and a reminder that it does, indeed, require more time to plan for the incorporation of critical thinking and active learning, but that learning is likely to be greatly enhanced.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Cynthia Swaine

Some of the librarians consulted with the Instruction Services Librarian as they began to plan these sessions. Early on, there was evidence that the librarians were thinking creatively themselves. One librarian who was going to teach in a room (outside the library) packed wall to wall with students, with no provision for any online demonstrations or hands-on experience with electronic resources, designed a session with three activities that promote critical thinking. He proved to the other librarians that critical thinking can happen in any setting; it just requires good planning.

At the end of the semester the librarians met to share both their successes and the approaches that didn't work as well as hoped. A variety of techniques had been used—some dramatic and effective, some simple but still effective. With a continued emphasis on critical thinking skills and active learning, we expect that librarians will improve their teaching skills and that learners will experience even greater understanding of libraries and information resources.

[Appendix on next page]

Cynthia Wright Swaine
Instruction Services Librarian
Old Dominion University
July 1997

Active Learning Planning Sheet for Librarians

Course:

How many students in each section:

How many sessions with librarian:

Length of each session:

Learning objectives & corresponding methods (prioritize):

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Learning Method</u>	<u>Time needed</u>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Active learning can mean something as simple as having students answer questions requiring critical thinking; having students do the keyboarding in demonstration searches; or having students suggest vocabulary, truncation, parentheses, etc. in formulating a good search statement while demonstrating a database.

On the other hand, once initial instruction is given, active learning can take place by having the class work in teams to examine resources on their own. In this way, they are learning by doing and learning from their peers, with the librarian there to serve as the expert consultant and as the leader who keeps the session focused and makes sure that points are clarified, reinforced, or expanded on as necessary.

Many of the points librarians have traditionally taken class time to explain (hours the library is open, how to make a cd-rom search appointment, etc.) can be put on a handout or posted elsewhere so that class time can focus on search strategies, information retrieval techniques, evaluation of resources, and the like, using active learning processes.

Teams organized by types of resources:

Student teams may be given standard worksheets and assigned specific resources to examine. The worksheets can ask for title of resource, type of information it contains, how it works and ease of use, currency/frequency of updating, limitations, etc. Groups can be given a certain amount of time, perhaps 10 minutes, for this and can then report their findings to the whole class (5 minute limit per group, for example).

Also, teams could be organized to solve simple library tasks or to complete an exercise in finding pertinent material on a topic.

Sample timeframe for a class 75-minute upper-division class session:

10:00	Welcome & handouts; give overview of the session and basic objectives
10:05	Introductory session; putting things in context; looking at the big picture
10:10	Initiate group formation with clear instructions on assignments
10:13	Groups begin (for example, 1 group using <i>Yahoo</i> to search the Internet, one group searching a cd-rom database, 2 groups searching different printed indexes and/or other important reference works) with librarian remaining in the area for consultation
10:35	Groups return and begin presentations (5 groups x 4 minutes each, plus 1 minute per presentation for the librarian to make further clarifications)
11:00	Librarian pulls it all together, possibly with a reminder of search strategy (on a handout), a brief trip to the reference area to show pertinent locations, or reminder of services such as interlibrary loan, reference assistance, availability of printed guides, etc.
11:15	Class dismissed

When working on this year's performance objective for library instruction, you will realize that it does indeed take more effort to plan for incorporation of teaching critical thinking skills and for active learning, but that learning is greatly enhanced when students have to think through processes for themselves, discover what works well and not so well, or distill the essence of a certain resource and present it clearly to their peers. The schedule shown above is by no means a format to use in every library instruction session; it is intended only as a sample of the type of process one might use with a particular class.

[end of document]



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: <u>Helping Librarians to Encourage Critical Thinking Through Active Learning Techniques in Library Instruction</u>	
Author(s): <u>Cynthia Wright Swaine</u>	
Corporate Source: <u>Old Dominion University</u>	Publication Date: <u>July 14, 1997</u>

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following options and sign the release below.



Sample sticker to be affixed to document

Sample sticker to be affixed to document



Check here

Permitting
microfiche
(4" x 6" film),
paper copy,
electronic,
and optical media
reproduction

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Level 1

Level 2

or here

Permitting
reproduction
in other than
paper copy.

Sign Here, Please

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Signature: <u>Cynthia Swaine</u>	Position: <u>Instruction Services Librarian</u>
Printed Name: <u>Cynthia Wright Swaine</u>	Organization: <u>Old Dominion University</u>
Address: <u>ODU Library Norfolk, VA 23529-0256</u>	Telephone Number: <u>(757) 683-4182</u>
	Date: <u>July 17, 1997</u>

OVER

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of this document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents which cannot be made available through EDRS).

Publisher/Distributor:	
Address:	
Price Per Copy:	Quantity Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name and address of current copyright/reproduction rights holder:	
Name:	
Address:	

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

IR
Information and Technology
Syracuse University
4-194 Center for Science & Technology
Syracuse, NY 13244-4100

If you are making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, you may return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Facility
1301 Piccard Drive, Suite 300
Rockville, Maryland 20850-4305
Telephone: (301) 258-5500